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of the times, which requires quickness rather than skill, is to lower the age at which a laborer can expect to earn full wages, and consequently to increase the number of years for which support must be provided. His conclusions are that some public relief is necessary, and that no scheme based on compulsory contributions of the insured or employer could be worked in England. He naturally, therefore, advocates a universal State pension to every person above the age of sixty-five of say five shillings per week. This, he estimates, would, if rich and poor alike drew their pensions, mean an increase of national burdens for the United Kingdom of about nineteen millions sterling. This proposition certainly has the merit of simplicity and cheapness of administration, and avoids all prying into character and past record.

But what shall we say of the principle involved? It certainly is the boldest proposition yet made on the subject of pensions. No doubt the economists of Herbert Spencer's way of thinking will denounce it as "paternalism" and as "Socialism." But it is a condition and not a theory with which England is confronted. It is highly probable that, as soon as the actual poverty of the aged is brought home to the popular conscience, something will be done, and that, too, irrespective of all preconceived theories of government. The Royal Commission on the aged poor for which Mr. Spender expresses a desire has since been appointed. We may await with interest the results of that inquiry; and meantime may take comfort in the thought that, when England acts, it will be from a conservative, practical, and not from a *doctrinaire* standpoint.

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*The Eve of the French Revolution.* By EDWARD J. LOWELL, author of "The Hessians and the other German Auxiliaries of Great Britain in the Revolutionary War." Pp. viii, 408. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1892.

There is a laudable tendency to-day to look more carefully at the transitional and preparatory periods of history. This is the outcome of a truer and more fruitful view of the function of historical study as to the discovery and correlation of causes and effects. It is rare enough that a scholarly work upon European history is produced in the United States. Mr. Lowell has, however, given us a judicious and careful treatment of a difficult and intricate subject. To write an account of the causes of the French Revolution is to picture a whole, complex civilization. The attempt to clear up even simple points soon leads the investigator to realize the obscurity of a period charac-

terized by its want of uniformity, and the wide divergence between the letter of the law and its actual application. One is forced to confine himself, as Mr. Lowell has done, to general statements. Any attempt to enumerate exceptions would be an endless task.

Mr. Lowell has given the English reader a general outline of the *moments* of French civilization at the outbreak of the Revolution. Another work like that of De Tocqueville, the result of twenty years' preparation, is not to be expected. The author avoids, however, the enumeration of perplexing details, which serve, as in Taine's work, to confuse rather than clarify our ideas. No attempt is made to treat the historical events during the reign of Louis XVI., a period so rich in illustrations of the prevailing abuses. For when the attempt was made to throw off the bad habits of the *Ancien régime*, it was first realized how inveterate and deep-seated these habits were. Mr. Lowell, it is to be hoped, may sometime find himself in a position to supplement the present work by a history of France for 1774-1789.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Lowell's "Index of Editions Cited," which furnishes us with a much-needed bibliography, should not have been more complete. We miss such works as Lomenie's "*Mirabeaus*," Bouchard's "*Système financier de l'ancien régime*," Aubertin's "*L'esprit public pendant la 18ième Siècle*," and Augeard's "*Memoires*."

J. H. R.

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*Complete Guide to the World's Twenty-Nine Metal Monetary Systems.*

By JOHN HENRY NORMAN, Member of the London Chamber of Commerce. Pp. xx, 328. New York : G. P. Putnam's Sons.

It is rather difficult at the outset to say what this work does *not* treat of. From its title one might expect a mere comparison of the actual monetary systems of different nations, with a brief history of their development. But, as the title page indicates, the author aims in addition to expound "foreign and colonial exchanges of gold, silver and inconvertible paper on the unit of weight system, with aids to the construction of the science of money." The plan of the book is defective, first, because the material is not welded together in any definite logical shape; and second, because the author has attempted to treat subjects broad enough to fill half a dozen volumes. It is a book such as might be expected from a business man, who with a clear grasp on each separate topic, has no clearly conceived notion of the dependence of the various parts. Of practical value may be cited the proposed method of calculating exchange by